



File Code: 1950/5430

Date: April 4, 2011

Dear Interested Party:

Enclosed for your review and comment during a thirty (30) day comment period is an Environmental Assessment (EA) prepared by the Forest Service for the proposed **Pine Creek Land Exchange**. You or your organization expressed an interest in this proposal.

In this proposal, the United States would exchange a total of 22.48 acres, more or less, of National Forest System (NFS) lands, and acquire a total of 33.23 acres of private lands.

The lands considered for exchange are on the Gardiner Ranger District of the Gallatin National Forest. The **Non-federal** lands are located approximately 3 miles northeast of the town of Jardine, within the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness. The **Federal** lands are located two miles east of Gardiner, just south of the Jardine Road and Blanding Station.

The primary purpose of this exchange is to acquire a private in holding within the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness. In addition, Pine Creek Trail # 627 passes through the southwestern portion of the **Non-federal** lands. This exchange would ensure legal access on this popular trail. The exchange would reduce the potential for private development within a designated Wilderness Area.

The Responsible Official for this project is the Forest Supervisor, Gallatin National Forest. The EA describes the Proposed Action and it provides a comparison of the potential effects for two alternatives, Alternative 1 - No Action and Alternative 2 - Proposed Action. Based on the analysis presented in the EA, Alternative 2 is the preferred alternative.

Comments on this EA are requested. The Forest Supervisor will consider all public comments before making a decision. In submitting comments, please provide specific facts along with supporting reasons that you believe should be considered by the Responsible Official in reaching a decision. Comments may be submitted in writing, orally, or through electronic means.

The EA is available on the website at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/gallatin>. To request a paper copy of the EA, contact the Gardiner Ranger District at the address given below.

Contact information to request a copy of the EA or send written comments is given below:

Mary Maj, District Ranger
Gardiner Ranger District
Gallatin National Forest
ph: 406-848-7375 ext. 24
mmaj@fs.fed.us

Written comments must be postmarked by the Postal Service, e-mailed, faxed, or otherwise submitted by 11:59 p.m. on the 30th calendar day following publication of the legal notice.



Hand delivered comments must be time and date imprinted at the Gardiner Ranger District office by the close of business on the 30th calendar day following publication of the legal notice.

Oral comments must be provided at the Gardiner Ranger District office during normal business hours (8:00 am – 4:30 pm weekdays), via telephone or in person, or if during non-business hours, must be at an official agency function (such as a public meeting), which is designed to elicit public comment.

Electronic comments may be submitted to **comments-northern-gallatin@fs.fed.us**. Insert **“Pine Creek Land Exchange”** in the subject line. Acceptable formats are MS Word, Word Perfect, or RTF. For electronically mailed comments, the sender should normally receive an automated electronic acknowledgement from the agency as confirmation of receipt. If the sender does not receive an automated acknowledgement of the receipt of comments, it is the sender’s responsibility to ensure timely receipt by other means.

A legal notice was published in the Bozeman Daily Chronicle (newspaper of record) on April 3, 2011. A notice was also published in the Livingston Enterprise. The comment period will start on April 4, 2011 (the day following publication of the legal notice) and end 30 days following the date of publication, **May 3, 2011**. To retain your administrative appeal rights, you must provide comments during this 30-day comment period

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record and available for public inspection.

Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered. However, those who submit anonymous comments will not have standing to appeal the subsequent decision under 36 CFR 215. Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d), any person may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting confidentiality should be aware that, under FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only very limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requester of its decision regarding the request for confidentiality. Where the request is denied, the agency will return the submission and notify the requester that comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address.

Sincerely,

/s/ Mary C. Erickson
MARY C. ERICKSON
Forest Supervisor

cc: Gary E Howard
Gardiner Ranger District